

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 SNM-02 DEAE-00 /070 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1536

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 9092

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, TH, MY

SUBJ: OPERATION BIG STAR II

SUMMARY: THAI-MALAYSIAN OPERATION BIG STAR II IN SADAO DISTRICT OF SONGKHLA PROVINCE WAS CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL IN TERMS OF PLANNED OBJECTIVES OF DISLODGING LOGISTICS AND DISRUPTING SANCTUARIES OF CPM-RF. MALAYSIAN EMBOFF STATES NEXT OPERATION UNDER CONSIDERATION IS IN BETONG SALIENT. END SUMMARY.

1. JOINT THAI-MALAYSIAN OPERATION BIG STAR II, A FOLLOW-UP TO BIG STAR I IN SADAO DISTRICT OF SONGKHLA PROVINCE, GOT UNDERWAY MAR 14 WITH A REPORTED 3200 MALAYSIAN AND 1500 THAI TROOPS PARTICIPATING. (NUMBERS ARE BELIEVED TO BE SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED.) OPERATION LASTED UNTIL APRIL 19 AND WAS CONSIDERED A SUCCESS IN MEETING ITS OBJECTIVES.

2. ACCORDING TO MALAYSIAN EMBOFF, MAIN PURPOSE OF OPERATION WAS TRAINING EXERCISE TO ACCUSTOM THAI AND MALAYSIAN TROOPS TO WORKING TOGETHER AND AT SAME TIME TO DISRUPT

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COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAY, REVOLUTIONARY FACTION (CPM-RF) SANCTUARIES IN SADAO. PRESS REPORTED THAT SOME 18 GUERRILLA CAMPS WERE FOUND AND DESTROYED. SEVERAL CAMPS WERE OBVIOUSLY WELL ESTABLISHED, AND THE BIGGEST HIT IN EYES OF PRESS WAS CAMP DISCOVERED BY MALAYSIAN TROOPS WHICH CONTAINED OPERATING TIN MINE. ASKED IF MALAYSIA WOULD LEAVE SOME TROOPS BEHIND TO PREVENT COMMUNISTS RE-ENTERING SANCTU-

ARY AREASEA, MAYALYSIAN EMBOFF, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING THAT THIA FORCES WERE PROBABLY TOO LIMITED IN NUMBER TO DETER RETURN OF CPM, SAID THAT AFTER WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN BETONG LAST YEAR, MALAYSIA COULD NOT AFFORD POLITICALLY TO LEAVE TROOPS BEHIND. ALTHOUGH RTG LEADERS HAD CHANGED SINCE BETTNG INCIDENT, LOCAL PEOPLE MIGHT STILL RESENT MALAYSIAN PRESENCE, AND THERE REMAIN PEOPLE IN BANGKOK WHO ARE NOT VERY PLEASED ABOUT MALAYSIAN TROOPS OPERATING ON THAI SOIL, ESPECIALLY SINCE MAIN TARGET IS CPM. PRESS ALSO REPORTS THAT MALAYSIAN S HAVE PAID COMPENSATION TO THAI FARMERS FOR DAMAGE DONE TO COPRS BY OPERATION. (ALLEGED CROP DAMAGE FROM A MALAYSIAN OPERATION IN BETONG WAS ONE OF INCIDENTS WHICH SPARKED ANTI-MALAYSIAN DEMONSTRATIONS AND EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF MALAYSIAN POLICE UNIT FROM BETONG IN 1976).

3. PRESS REPORTS CLAIM

THAT VILLAGERS HAVE CONFIRMED 20 C'S KILLED IN MOST RECENT OPERATION. MALAYSIAN EMBOFF SAID THERE WAS NOT WAY OF CHECKING SUCH REPORTS, AND A BODY COUNT HAD NOT REALLY BEEN THE OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THREE MALAYSIAN AND THREE THAI SOLDIERS WERE KILLED DURING OPERATION. ALSO, MALAYSIAN TROOPS EXCHANGED FIRE WITH CT'S DURING BIG STAR II, WHEREAS NO CONTACT WAS MADE BY EITHER THAI OR MALAYSIANS IN BIG STAR I OPERATION.

4 GIVEN PRESS REPORTS OF SIZE OF CAMPS DISCOVERED AND NUMBER OF CADRE THEY COULD PRESUMABLY ACCOMMODATE, MALAYSIAN EMBOFF WAS ASKED WHETHER ESTIMATES OF CADRE STRENGTH FOR

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CPM-RF WOULD BE REVISED. HE REPLIED THAT MALAYSIA STILL FELT CPM-RF ARMED FORCE NUMBERED ABOUT WTP AND CONJECTURED THAT SOME CAMPS MAY HAVE BEEN USED BY OTHER COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN THE SOUTH. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, PRECLUDE POSSIBILITY OF MALAYSIA REVISING TROOP STRENGTH ESTIMATES AFTER MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY RESULTS OF OPERATION. MALAYSIAN EMBOFF SAID ONE EFFECT OF RECENT OPERATION WAS APPARENT MOVEMENT BY GUERRILLAS SOUTH ONTO

MALAYSIAN SOIL. HE SAID THAT MALAYSIAN SECURITY ELEMENTS HAVE REPORTED THAT TRAINING CENTERS ARE NOW BEING ESTABLISHED IN PERLIS, KEDAH AND PERAK BY CT S BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN FORCED OUT OF SADAQ.

5. MALAYSIAN EMBOFF ALSO SAW AS SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT THE DISCOVERY OF REPORTED HEROIN LAB DURING COURSE OF OPERATION. THE LAB (WHICH CONSISTED OF A FEW POTS AND PANS AND SOME CHEMICALS) WAS VIEWED AS PROOF CTS WERE USING NARCOTICS AS MEANS OF FINANCING MOVEMENT. WHEN EMBOFF

SUGGESTED LAB MIGHT BE ISOLATED OPERATION UNRELATED TO CPM, MALAYSIAN EMBOFF SAID HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHETHER LAB WAS ACTUALLY LOCATED IN OR NEAR A CAMP.

6. ACCORDING TO MALAYSIAN EMBOFF, NEXT PROBABLE JOINT OPERATION WILL BE IN BETONG AREA. ALTHOUGH MALAYSIANS ARE WELL AWARE OF LIMITATIONS ON THAI TROOP STRENGTH IN SOUTH, MALAYSIAN EMBOFF PRAISED 4TH ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL PIN AS BEING A MAN FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO OPERATIONS IWHT MALAYSIA AND ONE WHO WOULD DO HIS BEST TO MAKE THAI TROOPS AVAIL-ABLE. MALAYSIAN EMBOFF SAID HE HOPED BETONG WOULD NOT RECEIVE ADVANCE PUBLICITY AND PRESS ATTENTION COMMON TO BIG STARS I AND II. GOING INTO BETONG WOULD INVOLVE SERIOUS FIGHTING, AND PLANS SHOULD NOT BE SIGNED IN ADVANCE.
WHITEHOUSE

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